

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2169

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 1353

NODIS
CHEROKEE

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM, PINT, SHUM
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL LETTER TO PRESIDENT PARK

REF: (A) STATE 033148, (B) STATE 033149

SUMMARY: PRESIDENTIAL LETTER DELIVERED TO PRESIDENT PARK BY AMBASSADOR FEBRUARY 16. PARK APPRECIATED LETTER AND ITS FRANK STRAIGHTFORWARD MANNER. HE WELCOMED EARLY TALKS ON TROOP REDUCTION WHILE EXPRESSING CONTINUED DESIRE ROKG FOR NO CHANGE IN PRESENT FORCE STRUCTURE. HE STRESSED NEED FOR CONSULTATION ON DETAILS WITH ROKG IN FIRST INSTANCE RATHER THAN JAPANESE. WHILE APPRECIATING VIEWS OF PRESIDENT CARTER ON HUMAN RIGHTS AS COMING FROM FRIEND AND ALLY, HE JUSTIFIED AT LENGTH HIS CURRENT POLICIES AND SHOWED NO INCLINATION TO RELEASE MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. END SUMMARY.

1. I MET FOR OVER AN HOUR WITH PRESIDENT PARK TO DELIVER PRESIDENT CARTER'S PERSONAL LETTER ON MORNING FEBRUARY 16. PARK WAS ACCOMPANIED AS USUAL BY SECRETARY GENERAL OF BLUE HOUSE KIM CHONG-YOM AND PROTOCOL CHIEF CHOI KWANG-SOO, WHO SERVED AS INTERPRETER.

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2. AT OUTSET, I PRESENTED PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO PARK AND THEN WENT OVER IN DETAIL POINTS IN LETTER, SINCE PARK PREFERS REVIEW TEXT OF SUCH LETTERS ONLY IN KOREAN TRANSLATION. IN DESCRIBING CONTENTS OF LETTER I ADDED SEVERAL ADDITIONAL POINTS SET FORTH REF A., PARTICULARLY OUR DESIRE TO BEGIN DIALOGUE WITH PARK AND OTHER HIGHEST KOREAN OFFICIALS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND SECURITY ISSUES AND

OUR HOPE TO PROVIDE FOREIGN MINISTER PARK WITH BETTER ESTIMATE AS TO TIMING OF CONSULTATIONS ON GROUND FORCES QUESTION. I DID NOT SPECIFICALLY ENCOURAGE RELEASE OF MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS, BUT ALLUDED TO CONCERNS IN US REGARDING SPECIFIC ISSUES SUCH AS FATE OF MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS. PARK UNDERSTOOD IMPLICATIONS OF MY REFERENCE AND SPOKE AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT RELEASE AS DESCRIBED BELOW. FINALLY, IN RESPONSE TO PARK'S QUESTION, I TOLD HIM WE ARE NOT LINKING SECURITY RELATIONSHIP TO HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, BUT HE MUST FACE REALITIES OF US OPINION AS WELL AS PRESIDENT CARTER'S PERSONAL CONCERN ON HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION.

3. PARK IN RESPONSE EXPRESSED HIS GREAT APPRECIATION FIRST FOR THE DEEP INTEREST IN KOREA SHOWN BY PRESIDENT CARTER SO EARLY IN HIS ADMINISTRATION GIVEN THE MANY PROBLEMS HE HAS TO ATTEND TO, AND SECOND FOR STATING HIS VIEWS IN A FRANK AND STRAIGHTFORWARD MANNER. HE THEN COMMENTED RELATIVELY BRIEFLY ON THE TROOP WITHDRAWAL ISSUE AND CONSULTATIVE PROCESS, BEFORE LAUNCHING INTO AN EXTENDED DEFENSE OF HIS HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES.

TROOP WITHDRAWAL.

4. PARK SAID THAT WITHDRAWAL HAD BEEN AN ISSUE SINCE THE START OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. IT HAD BEEN A MATTER OF CONCERN TO ROKG. HE NOW IS PLEASED TO HEAR OF BASIC STRUCTURE WITHIN WHICH WE WILL CONSIDER ISSUE AND OF PLANS FOR FULL CONSULTATION. KOREA'S BASIC VIEW ON TROOP WITHDRAWAL IS WELL KNOWN; IT WISHES NO CHANGE IN PRESENT STRUCTURE
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FOR CONSIDERABLE PERIOD AND UNTIL KOREAN FORCES ABLE TO TAKE OVER FROM US FORCES. HOWEVER GIVEN US APPARENT INTENTIONS FOR GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL, IT BETTER FOR KOREA TO KNOW BASIC CONCEPT AND CONCRETE COURSE TO BE FOLLOWED, INCLUDING SUCH QUESTIONS AS HOW LARGE AND WHEN. HE HAS INSTRUCTED FOREIGN MINISTER TO SOUND OUT USG VIEWS AT LEAST ON BASIC CONCEPT SO ROKG CAN PREPARE FOR CONTINGENCIES, EVEN THROUGH FINAL DETAILS WILL NOT BE DECIDED UNTIL AFTER FULL CONSULTATION.

5. I COMMENTED THAT GIVEN COMPLEXITIES INVOLVED WE WOULD NOT LIKELY BE ABLE TO PROVIDE FOREIGN MINISTER WITH ANY MORE ON PLANS THAN ALREADY MADE PUBLIC BY VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE OR COMMUNICATED PRIVATELY TO ROKG BY HOLBROOKE TO HAHM BOTH BEFORE REPEAT BEFORE AND AFTER VICE PRESIDENT'S TRIP AND BY MYSELF TO FONMIN AFTER TRIP. FONMIN HAD ALREADY BEEN WARNED OF THIS AND URGED TO EXPRESS KOREAN VIEWS AS HE DESIRED. PARK RESPONDED THAT WE SHOULD EXPECT NO REVISION IN KOREAN POSITION AND THAT ANY CHANGES IN US FORCE STRUCTURE SHOULD DEPEND ON CORRESPONDING CHANGES

IN KOREAN MILITARY CAPABILITIES.

CONSULTATIVE PROCESS.

6. PARK STRESSED THAT CONSULTATIONS ON REDUCTION/WITHDRAWAL SHOULD FIRST BE MADE WITH KOREAN GOVERNMENT SINCE US FORCES STATIONED ON KOREAN TERRITORY IN ACCORD WITH US-KOREA TREATY WITH OPERATIONAL COMMAND ENTRUSTED TO US. IT WOULD GIVE WRONG IMPRESSION TO OUTSIDE IF JAPANESE RATHER THAN ROK'S CONSULTED FIRST. WHILE UNDERSTANDING JAPAN'S KEEN INTEREST DUE TO RELATIONSHIP OF JAPAN'S SECURITY TO KOREA'S, US SHOULD STILL CONSULT FIRST WITH KOREA. KOREANS WILL BE RESPONSIBLE ALONG WITH US IF WAR BREAKS OUT IN KOREA, WHILE JAPAN WOULD NOT SEND "EVEN A SINGLE SOLDIER TO FIGHT." I ASSURED PARK THAT WE WOULD NATURALLY CONSULT BOTH FULLY AND FIRST WITH KOREA ON THE DETAILS OF TROOP REDUCTION AND, IN FACT, CONTRARY TO SOME IMPRESSIONS WE HAD NOT ALREADY
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CONSULTED ON SUCH MATTERS WITH JAPAN. VICE PRESIDENT'S DISCUSSIONS IN TOKYO SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED AS CONSULTATIONS IN THIS SENSE SINCE THEY AMOUNTED ONLY TO REITERATION OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S POSITION, BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY, WHILE PRIME MINISTER FUKUDA HAD MADE CLEAR HIS RECOGNITION THAT TROOP REDUCTION IS BILATERAL US-KOREAN ISSUE.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SEOUL 1353

NODIS CHEROKEE

7. PRESIDENT PARK THEN LAUNCHED INTO LENGTHY STATEMENT

OF HIS VIEWS ON HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTION BY STATING FULL AWARENESS OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S STRONGLY HELD VIEWS ON MORALITY AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, WHICH PARK FULLY AGREED WITH. IN FACT THERE IS NO HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE INVOLVED IN MYONGDONG QUESTION SINCE THIS CONSTITUTES TRIAL OF THOSE OPPOSED TO GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE. CRITICS OF KOREA FAIL TO UNDERSTAND OR RECOGNIZE BASIC CHARACTER OF PROBLEM INVOLVED, NAMELY THAT WHEN SURVIVAL OF A COUNTRY IS AT STAKE SOME RESTRICTIONS AND SOME LIMITATIONS ARE NECESSARY TO PRESERVE INTEGRITY OF NATION. DUE PROCESS OF LAW AND CONSTITUTIONAL PROCEDURES HAVE BEEN FOLLOWED. WHILE KOREAN CONSTITUTION GUARANTEES RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS, IT ALSO PERMITS INVOLCATION OF EMERGENCY MEASURES DURING A CRISIS OR EMERGENCY. THESE PROVISIONS OF CONSTITUTION ARE BACKED BY KOREAN PEOPLE WHO ACCEPT THE NEED FOR SUCH ACTIONS WHEN KOREA'S INTEGRITY AND SURVIVAL ARE AT STAKE, A POINT THAT PARK REITERATED CONSTANTLY. PARK WENT ON TO STATE THAT HE ASSUMES USG AND PEOPLE WANT THE FOLLOWING: GUARANTEES OF THE FULL RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS IN A CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STABILITY, ECONOMIC GROWTH, AND STRENGTHENING OF DEFENSE CAPABILITY SO THAT KOREA COULD SERVE AS A FULL ALLY OF THE US ABLE TO DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST COMMUNIST AGGRESSION. BUT POLITICAL REALITIES IN
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KOREA DO NOT PERMIT ME TO SATISFY FULLY THESE REQUIREMENTS. KOREA THEREFORE HAS TWO ALTERNATIVES, FIRST TO GUARANTEE HUMAN RIGHTS AT THE COST OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONFUSION AND RETROGRESSION OF THE ECONOMY, OR SECOND TO PURSUE THE OTHER REQUIREMENTS, AND MAINTENANCE OF NATIONAL UNITY FOR DEFENSE, EVEN THOUGH THERE REMAIN RESTRICTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS. THE MAJORITY OF KOREANS WISH THE LATTER ALTERNATIVE IN THE INTEREST OF KOREA'S SURVIVAL.

8. PARK SAID THAT HE WISHES TO LIBERALIZE ALL MEASURES AND FREE THE MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS, BUT HE CAN DO SO ONLY WHEN CONFIDENT SUCH ACTIONS WILL NOT AFFECT POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STABILITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH, A VIEW SHARED BY THE MAJORITY OF KOREAS. PARK DEFENDED MYONGDONG ACTIONS AS FULLY WITHIN DUE PROCESS OF LAW WITH INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY, RECOURSE TO APPEAL, AND OPEN TRIAL. IF COURTS FIND DEFENDANTS GUILTY AND INVOKE SENTENCES, THERE IS NO REASON TO FREE THE DEFENDANTS CONTRARY TO DUE PROCESS OF LAW.

9. PARK REITERATED HIS AWARENESS OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S DEEP PERSONAL INTEREST IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM, AS WELL AS THAT OF THE US PUBLIC. HE KNEW FULL WELL THAT FREEING MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS WOULD IMPROVE KOREA'S IMAGE

AND LESSEN CRITICISM. HE HOWEVER BELIEVES TO FREE THEM UNDER CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD LEAD TO CONFUSION AND DISORDER AND AS THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR KOREA'S SURVIVAL AND SECURITY HE IS UNWILLING TO TAKE THIS RISK. ONLY IF THERE ARE GUARANTEES THAT, ONCE MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS ARE FREED, THEY WILL NOT CONSTITUTE A FACTOR OF DISTURBANCE OR CONFUSION OR AFFECT POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STABILITY, WILL HE RELEASE THEM. BUT UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES PRESIDENT PARK FEELS HE HAS NO CHOICE AND HOPES PRESIDENT CARTER WILL UNDERSTAND.

10. PARK ADDED THAT HE HAS HEARD THAT THE MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS BELIEVE THEIR RELEASE WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED AS A RESULT OF USG
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PRESSURES. IF THEY THINK THIS THEY ARE WRONG BECAUSE RELEASE UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES WILL INEVITABLY LEAD TO DISTURBANCE OF LAW AND ORDER IN KOREA. HE BELIEVES USG AND PUBLIC SEEK A STABLE KOREA, UNITED AGAINST NORTH KOREAN THREAT, AND NOT POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONFUSION AS OCCURRED STEP BY STEP IN VIETNAM. IN CONCLUSION, PARK RECOGNIZED US EXPECTS ITS ALLIES TO PERFORM "EXCELLENTLY" BUT IN REAL POLITICS SOME REQUIREMENTS CANNOT BE MET. HE SAID HE WOULD BE WRITING DIRECTLY TO PRESIDENT CARTER IN RESPONSE TO HIS LETTER, BUT ASKED THAT I CONVEY HIS VIEWS AS SET FORTH ABOVE.

11. I RESPONDED BY SAYING I WOULD OF COURSE CONVEY HIS VIEWS BUT REITERATED THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN PRESIDENT CARTER'S LETTER, PARTICULARLY REQUEST FOR PARK TO GIVE CONSIDERATION TO WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD AND FOR A DEMONSTRATION OF SENSITIVITY TO VIEWS IN THE US. I URGED FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF MEASURES THAT COULD BE TAKEN WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF NOT DISTURBING STABILITY OF KOREA.

12. PARK SAID THAT HE FULLY RECOGNIZED PRESIDENT'S LETTER WAS WRITTEN IN A SPIRIT OF FRIENDSHIP AND COMES AS ADVICE FROM A FRIEND AND ALLY, EVEN THOUGH WE HAD NOT MENTIONED GREATER VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN NORTH KOREA. NEVERTHELESS AS THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR KOREA'S SAFETY, HE CANNOT BE LENIENT TO MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS UNTIL CONVINCED THEIR RELEASE WILL NOT DISTURB KOREAN STABILITY OR LEAD TO CONFUSION. HE URGED THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAVE TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN HIS JUDGMENT OF KOREAN SITUATION AND WHAT MEASURES HE MUST TAKE TO SAFEGUARD ITS SURVIVAL. AT END OF CONVERSATION I REITERATED OUR HOPE AND EXPECTATIONS OF CONTINUING DIALOGUE ON SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES WITH PARK AND OTHER TOP OFFICIALS AND THAT WE WOULD AWAIT HIS FURTHER REPEAT FURTHER VIEWS IN REPLYING TO THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER.

13. COMMENT: PRESIDENT'S LETTER WAS WELCOMED BY PRESIDENT PARK, PARTICULARLY CLEARCUT ASSURANCES ON SECURITY COMMITMENT

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AND TROOP REDUCTION CONSULTATION. PARK'S COMMENTS WERE ESSENTIALLY VINTAGE PARK AND RAN TRUE TO FORM. AFTER PRO FORMA STATEMENT OF VIEWS AGAINST TROOP WITHDRAWAL, HE ACCEPTED REALITY AND PRESSED INSTEAD FOR EARLY WORD AND CONSULTATIONS FIRST AND FULLY WITH KOREA, NOT JAPAN. HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH CAME AS NO SURPRICSE TO HIM AND WAS ACCEPTED FULLY IN SPIRIT OF FRIEND-SHIP AS SINCERE EXPRESSION OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S VIEWS. WHILE, AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, HE DID NOT BUDGE FROM HIS POSITION IN HIS INITIAL REACTIO, LETTER UNDOUBTEDLY REGISTERED WITH HIM AND LEFT IMPRESSION WHICH CAN BE DEEPENED IN CONTINUING DIALOGUE. AS COULD ALSO BE ANTICIPATED, HE WARNED AGAINST USG PRESSURES ON RELEASE OF MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS, WHILE LEAVING DOOR OPEN JUST A CRACK. I MADE CLEAR THAT, WHILE LETTER UNDOUBTEDLY REGISTERED WITH HIM AND LEFT IMPRESSION WHICH CAN BE DEEPENED IN CONTINUING DIALOGUE. AS COULD ALSO BE ANTICIPATED, HE WARNED AGAINST USG PRESSURES ON RELEASE OF MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS, WHILE LEAVING DOOR OPEN JUST A CRACK. I MADE CLEAR THAT, THAT, WHILE CONVEYING HIS INITIAL REACTIO, BALL IS NOW IN HIS COURT..SNEIDER

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